

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 7699

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: SOCIALIST, COMMUNIST CONFRONTATION WITH DC SET
MOLD OF FORMAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

REF: ROME 7140

SUMMARY: AS PARLIAMENTARIANS ABANDONED ROME AND TOOK TO THE
HUSTINGS, THE MOST HEAT IN THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IS BEING
GENERATED BETWEEN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) ON ONE HAND AND
SOCIALISTS (PSI) AND COMMUNISTS ON THE OTHER. DC-PSI
DIFFERENCES OPENLY SPLIT CENTER-LEFT MAJORITY IN SEVERAL
OF THE LAST PARLIAMENTARY VOTES. DESTPITE PASSAGE OF LAW AND
ORDER LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE JUST PRIOR TO PARLIAMENTARY ELEC-
TION RECESS, THIS ISSUE REMAINS A CENTRAL ONE IN CAMPAIGN.
DC-PCI POLEMICS SHARPENED IN RECENT DAYS BY PCI REACTION TO
TIME INTERVIEW OF DC PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE JUNE 15 LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS
HAS MOVED INTO ITS FORMAL PHASE AS CONTENDERS COMPLETED FILING
OF PARTY LISTS MAY 21. DESPITE LOCAL CHARACTER OF THESE
ELECTIONS, NATIONAL POLITICAL THEMES (I.E., NOT LOCAL) OUT-
LINED REFTTEL DOMINATE THE DEBATE. THE ELECTION IS A FREE FOR
ALL, WITH ALL MAJOR PARTIES CAMPAIGNING INDIVIDUALLY AGAINST
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS; AMONG THESE THE SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST
CAMPAIGNS ARE THE MOST AGGRESSIVE. IMMEDIATELY AT
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ISSUE IS THE POLITICAL BALANCE IN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT LOCAL

AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS (SEPAIR).

2. INCREASINGLY BITTER POLEMICS BETWEEN THE DC AND SOCIALISTS CAUSED THE LATTER TO BREAK WITH THE CENTER-LEFT PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY ON SEVERAL RECENT OCCASIONS. IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE JUST PRIOR TO THE MAY 22 FOUR WEEK ELECTION RECESS, THE PSI OPENLY SPLIT WITH THE MAJORITY ON THE ISSUE OF POLICY TOWARD STATE CONTROLLED INDUSTRY AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN COLLECTING SIGNATURES FOR A REFERENDUM ON ABORTION. THE SOCIALISTS ALSO CONTINUED THEIR EFFORTS TO MODIFY FURTHER THE RELATIVELY TOUGH REALE "LAW AND ORDER" BILL (ROME 6737). ALTHOUGH VOTING WITH THE CENTER-LEFT MAJORITY AND THE RIGHT-WING PARTIES FOR FINAL PASSAGE OF THE BILL, THE PSI (AND COMMUNIST PARTY) EARLIER VOTED TO ATTACH AMENDMENTS WHICH WOULD HAVE RETURNED THE LAW TO THE SENATE FOR RECONSIDERATION AND DELAYED ITS PASSAGE BEYOND THE JUNE 15 ELECTIONS. THE PSI-PCI AMENDMENTS WERE FINALLY DEFEATED WITH THE DETERMINING VOTE OF THE FAR RIGHT MSI PARTY. THE REALE BILL RECEIVED FINAL APPROVAL MAY 21 IN A VERSION SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR TO THAT PASSED BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MAY 8 (REFTEL) AND WENT INTO EFFECT ON MAY 25. DESPITE ITS PASSAGE, THE LAW AND ORDER ISSUE REMAINS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL THEMES OF THE CAMPAIGN- A THEME FED BY CONTINUING INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE.

3. ALTHOUGH ONLY REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL OFFICES ARE AT STAKE IN THE ELECTIONS, THE POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT REMAINS A MAJOR ELEMENT IN THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH IS SEEN BY MANY AS A TEST OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE ON THIS ISSUE. THE DEBATE HAS BEEN ENLIVENED BY DC PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI'S INTERVIEW IN TIME MAGAZINE WHICH RECEIVED HEAVY ITALIAN PRESS PLAY MAY 27. THE COMMUNIST DAILY (L'UNITA) REACTED MAY 27 WITH AN ANGRY BLAST CHARGING FANFANI WITH "UNCOUTH SPECULATION," AND CRITICIZING AS "SERVILE" HIS ATTRIBUTION OF A LEADING ROLE TO THE US IN NATO.

COMMENT: THE TURBULENT CLOSING SESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT AND THE OPENING SKIRMISHES IN THE FORMAL CAMPAIGN CONFIRM THREE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE ELECTIONS: THE DOMINANCE OF NATIONAL

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OVER LOCAL ISSUES, THEIR FREE-FOR-ALL NATURE WITH EACH PARTY LARGELY SCRAMBLING FOR VOTES ON ITS OWN, AND THE UNENVIABLE ROLE OF THE DC AS THE PARTY AGAINST WHICH MOST OF THE OTHERS ARE CAMPAIGNING. NEVERTHELESS, FOR THE DC, SHREWD CAMPAIGNING HELPED BY EVENTS, SEEMS TO HAVE REVERSED AN UNFAVORABLE TREND. HOW MUCH REMAINS TO BE SEEN. VOLPE

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